

AMERICA WHITHER? — ON TO WASHINGTON 201

The personal humility he had spoken in five states reached its lowest shrinking-point in the Hall of Assembly of the New York capitol: ". . . It is true that while I hold myself without mock modesty, the humblest of all individuals that have ever been elevated to the Presidency, I have a more difficult task to perform than any one of them. When the time comes I shall speak as well as I am able for the good of the present and future of this country—for the good both of the North and the South . . ."

Down the Hudson River, with greetings at Troy, Hudson, Peekskill. Then New York, the Front Door to America, where tall ships came in from the seven seas to one of the great world ports; where the 35,000 votes for Lincoln for President were a third of the total ballots; where had grown up the financial center of the country, with vast controls over trade, manufacture, transportation; where Mayor Fernando Wood had declared that New York should establish itself as a free city, separate from the Union, sovereign in itself like the seceded states of the South, thereby holding its trade and continuing "uninterrupted intercourse with every section" of the country; where bribe money had passed in franchise and city land deals; where the Mayor, as a party boss, had taken \$5,000 apiece from two lawyers for nominations for Supreme Court judgeships; where the Mayor and his aldermen awarded a street-cleaning contract for \$179,000 when another bid was \$84,000 less; where the Mayor's personal fortune had risen to at least \$150,000 out of politics; where only the corruption of the courts of justice had saved the Mayor from conviction of forgery, perjury and other crimes; where the Mayor and his brother Ben owned lotteries and were licensed as professional gamblers through charters from Southern States; where they owned the *New York Daily News* and openly advocated the rights of the Confederate States.

Lincoln rode in a procession of 30 carriages led by a platoon of mounted police. His open carriage, a barouche, had accommodated the Prince of Wales a few months before. At the Astor House 500 policemen held the

crowds in line. For the first time on his journey Lincoln faced a crowd of peculiar curiosity, its silence having a touch of the sinister. The cheers and shouts were not like Buffalo, Columbus, Indianapolis.

In the City Hall next morning, surrounded by aldermen and writers for the press, Lincoln faced Mayor Wood, spoke thanks for the reception "given me . . . by a people who do not by a majority agree with me." And "in reference to the difficulties . . . of which your Honor thought fit to speak so becomingly, and so justly as I suppose, I can only say that I fully concur in the sentiments expressed." He was talking past Wood and to the country in saying: "This Union should never be abandoned unless it fails and the probability of its preservation shall cease to exist without throwing the passengers and cargo overboard."

White kid gloves were then in style for wear at opera but Lincoln, in a box at the new and sumptuous Academy of Music on Fourteenth Street and Irving Place, wore *black* kids on his large hands contrasting with the red-velvet box front. In a box opposite, a Southern man remarked to the ladies of his party, "I think we ought to send some flowers over the way to the Undertaker of the Union." The word spread, and the press commented on the one pair of black gloves in the packed house.

Mrs. Lincoln the same evening was holding a fairly successful reception in the parlors of the Astor House. Newspapers mentioned Mrs. August Belmont as among those present, which caused Mrs. Belmont to send a note to the newspapers saying she wished it known that she was not present. Tad and Willie went with a nursemaid and saw a play at Laura Keane's Theatre. With mother and father they saw Barnum's museum and its mammoth monstrosities and concatenated curiosities.

"Abe is becoming more grave," said the partly humorous weekly *Vanity Fair*. "He don't construct as many jokes as he did. He fears he will get things mixed up if he don't look out."

Greeley was saying in his morning *Tribune* that the questions were plopped at Lincoln: "What is to be the issue of this Southern effervescence? Are we really to have civil war?" And Greeley printed a version of a Lincoln fable:

"When I was a young lawyer, and Illinois was little settled, I, with other lawyers, used to ride the circuit. Once a long spell of pouring rain flooded the whole country. Ahead of us was Fox River, larger than all the rest, and we could not help saying to each other, 'If these small streams give us so much trouble, how shall we get over Fox River?' Darkness fell before we had reached that stream, and we all stopped at a log tavern, had our horses put up, and resolved to pass the night. Here we were right glad to fall in with the Methodist Presiding Elder of the circuit, who rode it in all weather, knew all its ways, and could tell us all about Fox River. So we all gathered around him, and asked him if he knew about the crossing of Fox River. 'O yes,' he replied, 'I know all about Fox River. I have crossed it often, and understand it well. But I have one fixed rule with regard to Fox River: *I never cross it till I reach it!*' " The earnest Greeley found this "characteristic of Lincoln and his way of regarding portents of trouble."

A second fable was offered New York political thinkers. "I once knew a good, sound churchman, whom we'll call Brown," Lincoln was quoted, "who was on a committee to erect a bridge over a dangerous and rapid river. Architect after architect failed, and at last Brown said he had a friend named Jones who had built several bridges and could build this. 'Let's have him in,' said the committee. In came Jones. 'Can you build this bridge, sir?' 'Yes,'

replied Jones, 'I could build a bridge to the infernal regions, if necessary.' The sober committee were horrified, but when Jones retired Brown thought it fair to defend his friend. 'I know Jones so well,' said he, 'and he is so honest a man and so good an architect that, if he states soberly and positively that he can build a bridge to Hades—why, I believe it. But I have my doubts about the abutments on the infernal side.' "So," Lincoln added, "when politicians said they could harmonize the Northern and Southern wings of the democracy, I believed them. But I had my doubts about the abutments on the Southern side."

The New York reception of the President-elect was the most elaborate, pretentious, detailed, expensive—and yet the coldest—of all on the Lincoln journey toward inauguration.

Before the New Jersey Assembly at Trenton he referred to himself again as of no personal importance and thanked them for receiving him as "the representative, for the time being, of the majesty of the people of the United

States . . . The man does not live who is more devoted to peace than I am. None who would do more to preserve it. But it may be necessary to put the foot down firmly. [Here the audience broke out in cheers so loud and long that for some moments it was impossible to hear Mr. Lincoln's voice.] And if I do my duty, and do right, you will sustain me, will you not?" Loud cheers, and cries of "Yes, yes, we will." He closed saying in effect that he might be the last President of the United States: "If it [the ship of state] should suffer attack now, there will be no pilot ever needed for another voyage."

He arrived in Philadelphia at four o'clock. In the hotel parlor Lincoln stood handshaking that night for an hour or two. Later in Norman B. Judd's room Lincoln met Allan Pinkerton, a railroad detective in the service of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad, to guard trains and bridges and circumvent threatened explosions and fires. Pinkerton opened: "We have come to know, Mr. Lincoln, and beyond the shadow of a doubt, that there exists a plot to assassinate you. The attempt will be made on your way through Baltimore, day after tomorrow. I am here to help in outwitting the assassins." Lincoln sat with legs crossed, a good-natured curiosity on his face fading to a sober look. "I am listening, Mr. Pinkerton."

A barber named Fernandina was foremost among the conspirators, according to Pinkerton's spies, who, he said, had been at work for weeks and had become "bosom friends and inseparable companions" of the plotters. A melodramatic, maudlin speech by Fernandina at a secret meeting of the military company he captained was described by Pinkerton to Lincoln, the barber waving "a long glittering knife" over his head and crying: "This hireling Lincoln shall never, never be President. My life is of no consequence in a cause like this, and I am willing to give it for his. As Orsini gave his life for Italy, I am ready to die for the rights of the South and to crush out the abolitionist."

Pinkerton went personally to Baltimore, purporting to be a Georgia seces-

sonist, and "Fernandina cordially grasped my hand, and we all retired to a private saloon." Fernandina was asked if there was no other way to save the South than by killing Lincoln. He replied, in the Pinkerton report: "No, as well might you attempt to move the Washington Monument yonder with your breath, as to change our purpose. He must die—and die he shall." With another drink by this time, he was asked about the police. He had fixed that, too: "They are all with us. I have seen the Chief Marshal of Police, and he is all right. In a week from today, Lincoln will be a corpse." Also it seemed that Pinkerton detected another conspirator named Hill, who also drank heavy and often, and also was ready, in his talk, to kill Lincoln. He said, in the Pinkerton report, "I shall immortalize myself by plunging a knife into Lincoln's heart."

Lincoln interrupted with many questions. Supporting Pinkerton's viewpoint were the practical Judd and the equally practical Samuel M. Felton, a railroad president who considered the evidence positive of a plot to burn railroad bridges, blow up trains, "and murder Mr. Lincoln on his way to Washington." Pinkerton gave details of a wild-eyed plot. The police chief at Baltimore was arranging to send only a small force to the railroad depot, where a gang of toughs would start a fight to draw off the policemen. Then

the Ferdinand assassins would close round the President-elect and deliver the fatal shot or knife thrust. "We propose," said Pinkerton, "to take you on to Washington this very night, Mr. President, and steal a march on your enemies."

Lincoln deliberated, then: "Gentlemen, I appreciate the suggestions, and while I can stand anything essential in the way of misrepresentation, I do not feel I can go to Washington tonight. Tomorrow morning I have promised to raise the flag over Independence Hall, and after that to visit the legislature at Harrisburg. Whatever the cost, these two promises I must fulfill. Thereafter I shall be ready to consider any plan you may adopt."

From Washington that night arrived Frederick W. Seward, son of Lincoln's announced Secretary of State. He found Chestnut Street and the Continental Hotel gay with a serenade to the President-elect, music, flowers, flags, buzzing conversations, and "brilliantly lighted parlours filled with ladies and gentlemen who had come to 'pay their respects.' " Lamont took Seward to Lincoln's bedroom. "Presently Colonel Lamont called me," wrote Seward of that night, "and we met Mr. Lincoln coming down the hall . . . After friendly greeting he sat down by the table under the gas light to peruse the letter I had brought." The communications his father had so secretly and hurriedly sent on, which Lincoln read deliberately twice, stressed a report of one Colonel Stone:

A New York detective officer on duty in Baltimore for three weeks past reports this morning that there is serious danger of violence to, and the assassination of, Mr. Lincoln in his passage through that city, should the time of that passage be known. He states that there are banded rowdies holding secret meetings, and that he has heard threats of mobbing and violence, and has himself heard men declare that if Mr. Lincoln was to be assassinated they would like to be the men . . . All risk might be easily avoided by a change in the traveling arrangements which would bring Mr. Lincoln and a portion of his party through Baltimore by a night train without previous notice.

"Did you hear any names mentioned?" Lincoln pressed. "Did you, for instance, ever hear anything said about such a name as Pinkerton?" No, Seward had heard no such name. Lincoln smiled. "If different persons, not knowing of each other's work, have been pursuing separate clues that led to the same result, why then it shows there may be something in it. But if this is only the same story, filtered through two channels, and reaching me in two ways, then that don't make it any stronger. Don't you see?" They discussed it further and Lincoln rose, "Well, we haven't got to decide it tonight, anyway."

In studying what to do Lincoln had to consider the silence of Baltimore and Maryland. Governor Thomas H. Hicks of that state favored the Union as against secession and was himself threatened with death by men proclaiming their volunteer militia would shoot down Northern soldiers en route to Washington, would burn supply depots and railroad bridges, would if war came march their corps to Washington and take that city. Governor Hicks had a seething and sensitive public to handle, a people ready to show what they could do with guns, clubs, stones, bricks, in street fighting. The marshal of police, George P. Kane, was an open secessionist.

At six o'clock that morning of February 22, Washington's Birthday, Lincoln amid cannon salutes and crowd applause pulled a rope and raised a flag over Independence Hall. Inside Independence Hall he spoke to an audience crowding all corners and overflowing. He had often pondered over the "dangers" incurred by the men who had assembled there and framed the Declaration. Not merely separation from a motherland, but liberty as a hope to all the world, for all future time, was the sentiment guiding them. "It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance . . ." He asked if the country could be saved on that basis. If so he would consider himself one of the happiest men in the world. "But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle—I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it." He could see no need of bloodshed and war. "And I may say in advance, there will be no blood shed unless it be forced upon the Government . . ."

Judd had been up nearly the whole night in a conference with Pinkerton and other men. They arranged for Lincoln to journey from Harrisburg on a two-car train that night under conditions they believed would deliver him safely in Washington the next morning. In Harrisburg, amid guns and platoons, Lincoln replied to Governor Curtin's welcome that under the weight of his great responsibility he brought an honest heart, but "I dare not tell you that I bring a head sufficient for it." He would lean on the people. "If my own strength should fail, I shall at least fall back upon these masses, who, I think, under any circumstances will not fail."

That evening Lincoln was at a table in the dining room of the Jones House in Harrisburg. He had made three speeches during the day, listened to other speeches longer than his own, talked with Governor Curtin and men of power in Pennsylvania, and held a conference with members of his party. For the first time others than Judd learned of the change in plans. Judd had told Lincoln these other old friends should know what was afoot, Lincoln approving. "I reckon they will laugh at us, Judd, but you had better get them together."

Lincoln told them, "Unless there are some other reasons besides fear of ridicule, I am disposed to carry out Judd's plan." A. K. McClure, legislative member and a founder of the Republican party, was sure he heard Lincoln say, "What would the nation think of its President stealing into its capital like a thief in the night?" while Governor Curtin declared the question not one for Lincoln to decide.

Close to six o'clock Lincoln was called from the dinner table, went upstairs to his room, changed his dinner dress for a traveling suit, and came down with a soft felt hat sticking in his pocket, and a folded shawl on his arm. A carriage was ready. Then, as Judd told it: "Mr. Lamon went first into the carriage; Col. Sumner of the regular army, was following close after Mr. Lincoln; I put my hand gently on his shoulder; he turned to see what was wanted, and before I could explain the carriage was off. The situation was a little awkward." Judd had tricked Colonel Sumner into a moment of delay, and to the Colonel's furious words Judd replied, "When we get to Washington, Mr. Lincoln shall determine what apology is due you."

Lincoln and Lamon, with a lone car to themselves, drawn by a lone loco-

motive of the Pennsylvania Railroad, rode out of Harrisburg, no lights on, Lamon carrying two ordinary pistols, two derringers and two large knives. Telegraph linemen had cut the wires; all telegrams into or out of Harrisburg were shut off till further orders.

In Philadelphia shortly after ten a carriage with Detective Pinkerton and Superintendent Kenney of the P. W. & B. Railroad met Lincoln and Lamon at the Pennsylvania Railroad station and took them to the P. W. & B. station, where they were put on the last car of the New York-Washington train. A woman detective working for Pinkerton had reserved rear berths of a sleeping-car, one for her "invalid brother" to be occupied by Lincoln, who was quickly in his berth with the curtains carefully drawn.

Unknown to Pinkerton or Lamon, on that last car a powerfully built man, armed with a revolver, slept in a berth engaged at New York. He was Superintendent John A. Kennedy of the New York police department, an officer of valor and integrity, who did not know that his detective, Bookstaver, had rushed on to Washington and reported his Baltimore findings to Seward. Kennedy was acting on reports received from his other two men in Baltimore, and his intention, as he slept in the same car with Lincoln that night, was to warn the authorities in Washington next morning that Lincoln would require safeguarding in his scheduled trip across Maryland the next day.

Baltimore was reached at 3:30 in the morning, and of the stop there Pinkerton wrote: "An officer of the road entered the car and whispered in my ear the welcome words 'All's well' . . ." An hour and more the train waited for a connecting train from the west. A drunken traveler on the train platform sang "Dixie," sang over and again how he would live and die in dear old Dixie. Lincoln murmured sleepily, said Pinkerton, "No doubt there will be a great time in Dixie by and by." Except for "a joke or two in an undertone," Lincoln was not heard from during the night, according to Lamon. At six in the morning the President-elect stepped off the train in Washington.

Thus ended the night ride of the vanishing and reappearing President-elect. The special train from Harrisburg drew into Baltimore in the afternoon like a clock with its hour hand gone, disappointing Mayor George Brown, city officials and an immense crowd. "At the Calvert station were not less than 10,000 people," wrote I. K. Bowen to Howell Cobb in Georgia, "and the moment the train arrived, supposing Lincoln was aboard, the most terrific cheers ever heard were sent up, three for the Southern Confederacy, three for 'gallant Jeff Davis,' and three groans for 'the Rail Splitter.' Had Lincoln been there, contrary to my preconceived opinions, he would have met with trouble . . ."

In many variations the tale went world-wide of the long-shanked Chief Magistrate in flight disguised in a Scotch plaid cap and a long military cloak. In thousands of journals it was repeated in news items, cartoons and editorial comment. Who started it? A lone press writer, Joseph Howard, a pathetic rascal who had a habit of getting newspapers into trouble with his frauds and hoaxes. Howard telegraphed his newspaper, the *New York Times*, a responsible journal friendly to Lincoln, of Lincoln's arrival in Washington: "He wore a Scotch plaid cap and a very long military cloak,

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